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RECONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION IN NURSING¹

BY FRANCIS W. SHEPARDSON

Director Department of Registration and Education, Springfield, Ill.

Reconstruction and rehabilitation are two words much noticed in the public press to-day. They appear to carry a double meaning. When first used they looked to the future. They had in mind a country in every community of which were to be large numbers of men handicapped in some way by reason of physical losses in the military service. Those who had lost their sight were to be re-educated in work the blind might do. Those who had lost leg or arm were to be prepared for such fields of activity as would be open to them thus crippled. The sudden termination of the war and the assurance that the total number of the maimed would be much smaller than was expected greatly altered the immediate content of the two words.

The other meaning of the words is the one now of greater importance. Reconstruction and rehabilitation now relate themselves to the reorganization of methods which have been followed in the past, but whose values have been brought into question as the outcome of war inquiries and war experiences. For example, a large number of the men who were examined for military duties in connection with the selective service were found to be illiterate. It became necessary in every cantonment to establish a school to train these soldiers in the elements of education. The conviction became clear that the American citizenship of to-morrow should not contain any appreciable number of men and women devoid of the rudiments of education.

The same war experience brought the revelation that there were many real aliens in the country whose sympathies were not with the land from which they were gaining their livelihood and in which they had their homes. That this state of affairs should be remedied, no one doubted. Americanism should be taught to every immigrant as part of a national obligation to future generations.

Still another impression resultant from the war is that the ordinary education hitherto afforded to American boys does not fit them to do specific things which are needed in war time. Special training schools had to be established for many purposes. There was developed a feeling of discontent with the accomplishments of our educational system. So, many people began to talk about reorganization and rehabilitation. It might be easy to enlarge upon this theme, but enough has been said to illustrate the point.

¹ Address delivered at the fifteenth annual meeting of the Illinois State Association, Chicago, December 13, 1918.

One of the things connected with the war which has attracted large attention has been the question of public health and sanitation. It was soon shown in experience that an evil more to be dreaded than the bullets of the enemies was venereal disease. The War Department took hold of this subject vigorously and made surveys of conditions surrounding the cantonments and camps. Zones were established from which efforts were made to exterminate the elements connected with the spread of this type of disease. In the minds of many citizens the question has been asked, If such precautionary methods are necessary or desirable for men in the military service of their country, why are they not equally necessary and desirable for the greater number of civilians? If training in topics relating to sanitation and the physical welfare of those who make up the army of the country is desirable, why should it not be equally desirable in times of peace for the citizenship of the land?

Questions like these have led to a large amount of thinking. There is no doubt that one of the best results of the war on American life will be the advance in many phases of community life. Among these the establishment of the community health center seems likely, where there shall be opportunity for the emphasizing of the fundamentals of public health which have been brought to prominence through the selective service military experience.

The natural location of such a public health center in the community will be the hospital. It will be a building constructed on proper lines and large enough to meet the needs of the community in which it is established. It will be a place of pride for the citizens, where the local physicians will find both pleasure and social profit in practice. It will be for public health what the public school is for education; the place where rich and poor, well-favored and ill-favored will find contact. It may prove the most important advance of a century. In an age where results of the most astounding character are attained quickly, no argument based upon the past failures to support such local institutions can be considered to be determinative. No one could have dreamed in 1917 that before the close of 1918 the Kaiser would be in exile, the German Empire in the throes of dissolution, and all the proud boasts of half a century proved absolutely foundationless. If such a community health center and such a community interest in public health seem to any one to be visionary, the answer is that the visions of yesterday quite frequently have become the actualities of to-day.

Should such a notion find development in even a few communities, the relationship to the general problem of the nurses' school is apparent. This is the theme for thought now for a short time.

The administration of the nurses' law in Illinois has not been attended with satisfaction. There has been more friction and more occasion for complaint than in connection with any other licensure law administered by the Department of Registration and Education. The reason for this may be that the law possibly does not recognize those fundamental principles of right and justice without which no law can long prevail. It has also sometimes seemed to me, looking at things from the viewpoint of an outsider, that there is not a sufficiently clear determination of the proper classification of nursing, whether mere occupation or profession. This feeling has been strengthened through listening to many conversations and discussions upon problems relating to nursing. Time and time again, apparently earnest argument for the welfare of nursing has quickly lost its tone of sincerity in an evident consideration of the superior interests of a particular hospital or school of nurses, as if it were far more important to have the required assistance in such a school or hospital than to secure some coveted gain for the individuals enrolled in the school of nursing who are looking forward to a life work. When, under such conditions, a suggestion of this ulterior motive was made and the response came quickly that it was essential that hospitals have the required assistance, the impression mentioned was only deepened.

Is nursing an occupation for personal gain? Is it an employment entered into for the primary purpose of earning a living? Is it one in which an individual, gifted with a peculiar knack or skill, might win distinct success even without much special training? Or is it a profession, into which individuals enter as a life work, with something of a desire to be of service to humanity while engaged in a practice which will at the same time yield a proper personal income?

If this last is to be considered the proper status of nursing, then there comes another question, the answer to which is of supreme importance in connection with any thorough-going discussion of the problem of the nurses' school.

"The Standard Curriculum for Nurses," a volume which has been prepared with care by those interested in the work, indicates quite definitely that a school for nurses must differ essentially from other professional schools in many respects. It declares that it must always be located in a hospital, since the most important part of the instruction of necessity associates itself with the practical work of a hospital. If, now, there must also be a recognition of the need of assistance in the hospital which has been mentioned, then there is no other conclusion than that every hospital which conforms to a certain standard is potentially the location of a nursing school, and that there is no outlook for the teaching of nursing as a profession except through

the existence of a multiplicity of schools. These schools must vary in their strength according to the endowment and equipment of the particular hospital. Should the movement for a public health center in every community, already mentioned, become popular, then the number of nursing schools must increase until in every city, town and village there may be an institution turning out so-called professional nurses.

Such a prospect makes slight appeal to anyone interested in the development of professional education. It is difficult to imagine a profession to which any particular honor could be attached, made up of such an army of members hailing from every part of a state. But, if that is the inevitable prospect, it should be faced thoughtfully and the best possible made out of what would appear to be a perpetually unsatisfactory situation.

There is another line of thought which ought to be followed, if only for contrast. The great medical profession has constant need of additions to its ranks. These additions come from the student body which is being trained in the medical schools. Several times a year, examinations for state licensure are held and new physicians are given authority to engage in practice, but to meet the medical demands of the entire state of Illinois there are but five recognized medical schools. In the United States, taken as a whole, there are but sixty-nine medical colleges which are recognized. As you appreciate, this number, which supplies the great profession of medicine throughout the land, is smaller than the number of recognized nurses' schools in the state of Illinois alone.

The same showing might be made for pharmacy, for which in Illinois one college is recognized, or for dentistry, where we have three recognized schools in this state. The professions of medicine, dentistry and pharmacy are honored because relatively few are admitted to them. The public understands that those who are entitled to call themselves by the name of doctor, pharmacist or dentist have secured this right as a result of special professional training. If there were schools of medicine or dentistry or pharmacy in every city of ten thousand or more, the number of practitioners would be so great as to bring the profession into a state closely approaching contempt, or at least into a condition where, because of the sheer numbers of those entitled to be given a label, respect to any individual practitioner would be definitely minimized.

While my own personal conception of the meaning of a profession leads me to think of it as a vocation for the few and the specially trained, it is entirely possible that the nursing profession, if profession it be, is the exception which proves the rule, and that in

it there must need be an army of people rather than a smaller number of thoroughly trained specialists. But I should dislike to dismiss the subject without at least a question whether it would be possible to have a small number of schools for nurses, say not to exceed ten, from which real professional people might graduate after having had a course of training worthy of professional recognition. Apparently such a proposition is barred, if the general contention of the "Standard Curriculum for Schools of Nursing" is to be considered determinative.

Take now the other proposition: "If necessity is to dictate that there shall be a school of nurses in every hospital of any size, is there any plan possible by which there may be clearly divided groups of schools? For example, some are giving the entire instruction needed to satisfy the requirements for the profession of a registered nurse, and others which are limited in equipment and in teaching force, cannot be expected to provide satisfactorily more than a part of such necessary training? No one doubts that there might be such groupings, provided there were established between the different types of schools a working arrangement which would be mutually satisfactory. The small hospital must have its attendants as well as the large. The nurses' school in the small hospital, of necessity, must feel the drain of the nurses' school in the large hospital. The one is put in the position of fighting all the time to retain its helpers; the other in the position, whether intentional or not, of all the time drawing the best candidates from the other. It is slight wonder, therefore, that those who are connected with the small hospitals and the small schools are suspicious of those who are affiliated with the larger ones. A nurses' school in a small hospital which attempts to provide instruction for which it is not equipped is not a desirable thing. Even the supporters of the small hospital and the small school realize that, but self-preservation is the law which forces them to undertake that for which they are not properly prepared.

If now, into the minds of those who conduct these smaller schools there comes a suspicion that the law and the methods of administering the law are working in the interests of the larger schools in the larger hospitals, to the great detriment of the smaller schools in the small hospitals, an element of discord and difficulty is introduced which is bound to produce discontent, friction and sharp opposition to what otherwise might be regarded as a highly desirable law. That these conditions actually exist in Illinois is apparent. A problem of no small importance is to remove any and all grounds for this suspicion and consequent discontent.

When the late William R. Harper, president of the University of Chicago, gave expression to many notable projects in education, with

resistless energy in accomplishment for the present, he also had large visions for the future. He had decided convictions regarding what is called the small college. He believed in it and in its field. He recognized the fact of the development of great universities whose endowments enabled them to draw to their faculties the better trained men. He saw that the drain and strain upon the small college was very great. He saw the latter trying to keep up a hopeless contest with the larger and more favored institutions in attempting to do a quality and quantity of work for which in many cases it was entirely unfitted. At the same time he noted the development of great high schools, with splendid buildings, with the hearty support of the communities in which they were located, with faculties composed of men and women of the highest type of education, and he believed it entirely possible that such schools might well do work in advance of the four years' high school course. He saw, too, privately endowed academies under exactly the same situation.

The result was that he became an enthusiastic advocate of the junior college. He hoped to see the day when the so-called freshman and sophomore classes at the university of which he was the head should be entirely abandoned, all such students being relegated to the instruction of the junior colleges, whether such were advanced high schools, private academies giving a two years' college course, or former four-year colleges which had reduced their teaching to two years. He believed that the studies included in the first two years of the usual college curriculum were, in a large degree, preparatory to the real university work, which he thought should begin with what is ordinarily known as the junior year. He felt that the interests of education in general would be greatly advanced by this plan, because many students who could not see any possibility of taking a complete college course might be encouraged to take two years beyond the high school. He felt that on the completion of such a course there should be proper recognition.

There was one element in this plan which must not be overlooked for a moment. In order to make the scheme workable, the universities of necessity had to give assurance to the subordinate institutions that the work done by them would be recognized and accredited by the universities. This being determined beyond doubt, the lower school would find its own position strengthened by reason of its ability to declare that it had such recognition from above.

It has been this scheme of education, now no longer a vision but a fact accomplished in many places, which has been in mind, as the problems of the nurses' schools in Illinois have been carefully considered with much thought. Certain things are clearly understood.

There are many nurses' schools which are trying to meet requirements by giving a three years' training course when they are entirely unprepared for it and know that they are unprepared. If some plan could be devised whereby they might do a smaller amount of work with the assured knowledge that such of their students as desired to take further study would have credit in better prepared schools for the work done, one powerful source of discontent with, and opposition to, the present nursing law in this state would entirely disappear. If, however, in the nature of the case there can be no great professional schools of nursing, as there are professional schools in other lines fairly comparable with nursing, then the problem remains complicated and perhaps always unsolved.

If, on the other hand, the illustration of the junior college has a suggestion, it might be possible to devise a plan for training which would cover two distinct types. One would be the ambitious and energetic individual willing to spend a long time in study in order to receive eventually the coveted designation of Registered Nurse, and with that the extra emoluments from practice which the better trained professional person expects and which society is willing to pay. The other would be the person who has no time to devote to higher study, or who is prevented by the lack of means from continuing the training, or who lacks the ambition of the other individual, and yet wants to follow the occupation of nursing. Surely for such an individual there ought to be some provision made. There ought also to be consideration of the occasional student who, starting with the second idea in mind, receives inspiration from the training to go forward to the position of the first named type.

The possibility just mentioned brings another question. Should the preliminary requirements for both types be the same, i. e., if it were decided that the high school training is essential to the beginning of a course of study leading to the rank of Registered Nurse, should the same amount of preliminary education be required for the one who never expects to study more than one or two years; or should the latter class of students be required to furnish no more than a grammar school education, or one or more years in a high school? A wise solution of this problem would be helpful also.

Possibly there have already been indicated some of the rather perplexing and difficult situations which must be met. The age-old query again comes: Which is better, to demand the ideal at once, and failing to attain it, take a position refusing any advance; or to fix the mind on an ideal and then approach it gradually, stopping on the way to meet frankly and openly objections and difficulties, and eventually getting to the goal with the hearty and sympathetic coöperation of all?

The testimony of experience certainly favors the latter method of advance; notably in the field of education.

The law regulating the practice of nursing in Illinois needs revision. It was written in connection with a State Board of Nurse Examiners which has passed out of existence through the adoption of the Civil Administrative Code. The language of the law, therefore, at the approaching session of the legislature, should be modified so as to bring it into harmony with actual administrative conditions. Such an occasion of altering the form of the law might well be used to make any desired changes in its content. If it should seem desirable to establish and recognize two clearly distinct gradations of nurses, one, that of the attendant, or some other designation, and the other that of the Registered Nurse, this should be set forth in the law. If it should appeal to the representatives of the nurses as a desirable thing to adopt the principle of annual registration now popular with and practiced by other professions, this time of law change might well be taken to bring that about. If the experience of the few years during which the present law has been in operation has brought suggestions of omissions, additions or larger activities, this would be the time to make the proper adaptations of the law.

There are a number of other subjects which demand long continued, intelligent and patient consideration. With a possibility of two grades of nurses' schools and two or more grades of nurses, there must be standards determined upon. Hospitals and schools must be fitted to those standards. This must be done thoroughly, honestly, and with such consideration, as to work substantial justice to all interests.

The curriculum of the school must be worked over again and again. During recent months a question has arisen whether a school for nurses might properly give time credit to one who has spent four years in college. It has been argued that the superior mental discipline of such a person as compared with that of one coming fresh from the grammar school or from one year in the high school ought to be an element of credit value. The theory is absolutely correct. The suggestion has been made that special provision should be made in the curriculum for those who desire to enter public health service, or administrative fields connected with hospitals or nursing schools. Would it be possible to develop a satisfactory curriculum which should require certain courses of all students, but should permit, at a given point in the course, a free election in subjects, according to the direction in which the student at that time confidently expects to go? Should such a curriculum be organized, then it might easily be possible to permit recognition, in time and subject credits, of the

cultural value of a complete course in a college of liberal arts and sciences. But when these suggestions are made, again comes the proposition from the "Standard Curriculum for Schools of Nursing," that the greater part of the study must be done in connection with the practical work of a hospital.

There is another thing which should be kept in mind constantly. If the standard can be brought up to a point where the candidate for the title of Registered Nurse is required to present a certificate of four years of high school instruction preparatory to entrance; and if, in standardized schools with standardized curricula, thorough instruction is given in subjects to be found in the curriculum of the ordinary college, there should be no great obstacle to the recognition of credits of such students of nurses' schools toward the required number of credits for a bachelor's degree in college or university. Along this line, too, comes the other quick question, whether it might be possible, some day, to have a combined college and professional course where those who had hopes of filling the higher positions in the nursing profession might be encouraged to secure both the bachelor's degree from a recognized college, and in addition, the special certificate or diploma indicating the completion of a supplementary course of study of a more special and technical character. It is appreciated, of course, that this may be a dream of the future.

Perhaps it would not be out of place to say a word or two about the annual registration feature which is frequently noted in connection with licensure laws. It is of great value to know at any time what individuals are entitled to the privileges of a given profession. It also is important to know where such individuals are residing at a given time. Where death makes its inroads or those licensed withdraw from the practice of their profession, it does not require a long period until any attempt at keeping a correct record is rendered hopeless. An annual registration would remedy these defects. Incidentally the payment of a small annual fee, say of one dollar, would increase the revenues of the Department of Registration and Education so as to enable it to increase its activities in the same proportion. As a matter of fact, the greater part of the appropriation made to the department is composed of the fees which are paid into it by licentiates in various occupations, trades and professions. The greater the amount of the fees paid, the greater the amount of the appropriation, hence the greater the power of the department in enforcing the laws under its supervision.

Thus, in brief, have been reviewed before you some of the difficulties and some of the problems which are associated with the licensure of nurses in Illinois. They are real difficulties; the problems

are perplexing; they cannot find solution except through careful, open-minded, intelligent study which must have behind it an insistent desire to be just and to keep in mind the larger interests of all, rather than the peculiar institutional or personal interests of the few. If those who are giving much time and consideration to these problems are able to reach an agreement which will be acceptable to all who have any part in the concerns of the nurses, it will be a distinctly creditable achievement. That there is constructive work for some one of large vision, there can be no doubt.

ANGEL OF THE CRIMEA

BY MINNIE D. WILBUR, R.N.

Springfield, Illinois

O Lady with the Lamp! Behold the glow,
That heavenly flame you kindled long ago,
Is sending now to every race and creed,
Help for the helpless, gifts for those in need.
That vital spark which woke in your brave soul
Burns on and on, an ever fadeless goal.
Years shall not dim its brightness, as they fly,
For time is naught to deeds that never die.
O pain of war! O joy of peace! No more
Shall smoulder low that heavenly flame which bore
Aid for all future centuries, to bind
Our faith in God, our love for humankind.

THE WAR IN CHINA

BY NINA D. GAGE, R.N.

Changsha, China

The Hunan-Yale Hospital, Changsha, China, felt itself a part of the world war when in November, 1917, it had to expand from 130 beds to 600, to care for wounded soldiers. Trouble had occurred between the Northern and Southern forces, with a strong suspicion that it was fomented by the Germans to keep Chinese troops occupied at home and prevent their helping the Allies. During October, Northern troops poured into Changsha, the capital of Hunan province, thinking to reduce it to submission, but they were driven out during November with heavy losses. Shooting was so violent in the streets